FACTORS PREDICTING BARRIERS TO EXERCISE IN MIDLIFE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

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Introduction: Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability worldwide being largely attributable to modifiable lifestyle risk factors including physical inactivity. There is evidence exercise barriers perceptions are correlated with physical activity, although little is known about what factors influence the strength of those perceptions in midlife women. This study aimed to investigate the extent that socio-demographic factors, lifestyle behaviours, health factors, perceived benefits and exercise self-efficacy predict perceived barriers to exercise in midlife women.

Methods: This cross sectional descriptive study collected data from midlife Australian females by online questionnaire. Volunteers aged between 40 and 65 years were recruited following media publicity about the study. The primary outcome measure was perceived exercise barriers (EBBS Barriers sub-scale). Other self-report data includes: exercise, smoking, alcohol, fruit and vegetable consumption, body mass index, physical and mental health and well-being (MOS SF-12®) and exercise self-efficacy.

Results: On average, the 225 participants were aged 50.9 years (SD = 5.9). The significant predictors of perceived barriers to exercise were perceived benefits of exercise, exercise self-efficacy, physical well-being and mental well-being. These variables explained 41% of variance in the final model (F (8,219) = 20.1, $p < .01$)

Conclusions: In midlife women, exercise barriers perceptions correlate with beliefs about the health benefits of exercise, exercise self-efficacy, physical and mental well-being. With midlife women increasingly susceptible to non-communicable diseases attributable to modifiable lifestyle risk factors, these findings have application to the design and delivery of health promotion interventions to better facilitate positive exercise behaviour change.

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